

MEXICO

Disappearance of 43 Students: suspicion of torture, collusion between officials and organized crime

RRN letter [excerpted]

October 13, 2014: to the governor of Guerrero and federal interior minister, with copies to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IAHCR) and other officials

We are extremely concerned about college students killed and missing in Guerrero. Three students and three others were killed on September 26. As of October 6, 43 students remain missing...On September 26 around 9pm, as 80 students of the Rural Teacher Training College of Ayotzinapa in Guerrero State were leaving the town of Iguala in three buses to return to Chilpancingo, the capital of Guerrero, they were intercepted by municipal police who opened fire without warning...The Guerrero State Attorney General's Office is in charge of investigating... This is troublesome because the Guerrero Attorney General's Office is alleged to have links with criminal groups and it has repeatedly failed to carry out effective investigations into grave human rights violations.

RRN letter [excerpted]

April 13, 2015: to the president and attorney general of Mexico

We are extremely concerned about the flawed process of investigating the enforced disappearance of 43 college students Guerrero in September 2014...[At the request of the families,] the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) appointed an international group of experts who are reviewing the government's response to the case. We understand that government authorities in Mexico have agreed to this. We are expecting to see full cooperation with the group.

RRN letter [excerpted]

May 16, 2015: to the president and attorney general of Mexico

Bernardo Javier Cano Torres is one of the hosts of the program "Hora Cero" on Iguala-based ABC Radio 93.9FM. On the evening of May 7 he was on his way home when he disappeared on the road between Iguala and Teloloapan...In a recent program, [he] commented on the threats received by [his co-host] from one of the brothers of José Luis Abarca, the former Iguala mayor who was arrested for his alleged role in the disappearance of 43 student teachers in September 2014.

Update from IAHCR

Nov 2014: IAHCR (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights) appointed the GIEI (Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts) to assist in the investigation of the 43 disappeared college students

Sep 2015: GIEI findings: 1- scientifically disproved Mexican government's theory that students' bodies had been burned in a trash dump; 2- need to investigate possible connection to drug trafficking

Oct 2015: GIEI signed renewed agreement to continue for 6 months

Since Oct 2015:

- 1- new team of investigators from Mexico's Human Rights Prosecutor's Office assigned to work with GIEI
- 2- further evidence that the bodies were not burned: satellite images and meteorological study
- 3- government now investigating reports of torture or mistreatment among detainees who were released

Summary by WOLA (Washington Office on Latin America)

"Because of the alleged complicity of the federal authorities, some argue that the disappearance of the 43 normalistas [students] should be understood as an act of genocide that forms part of a strategy to control the population, especially social activists and particularly young people, by the federal government."
SI!Paz Report, Sep. 2015

Former Iguala Mayor Jose Luis Abarca Velazquez was arrested and charged with murder in connection with the disappearance of the 43 students, and 66 police from Iguala and neighboring Cocula have been jailed.

Authorities have disbanded the local police force that turned the students over to the Guerreros Unidos drug cartel, which was closely allied with Mayor Abarca.

Rapid Response Network

InterReligious Task Force on Central America

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